



San Anton Gardens, Malta

MOMENTS OF REFLECTION

A MONTH OF POETRY

UNA SCHEMBRI

Moments of Reflection

A Month of Poetry

From Una Schembri

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[1] Believe in Myself

Believe in myself – is this an antidote –
Against my doubting, uneasy nature –
Would it supply me with trust and confidence?
Would it sweep obstacles in my future?

I wish I were easily persuaded
That what's impossible is made possible,
By changing doubt into constant belief –
By miracles that are so often credible!

Does make-believe approach self-confidence –
Smothering distrust, giving assurance
Of pleasant feelings of security
That reality will replace all pretence?

So I must learn that belief in myself
Is not foolhardy or an overbearing
State of a normal personality,
But a notion for which I am praying.

Believe in myself; nourish self-esteem;
Liking myself – do these terms mean the same?
I am a migrant away from my roots –
Not to worry – I will play the pretence game.

* * *

[2] Facing my Fears

Why am I scared of many things?
Why do I feel such apprehension?
Dreading that all is not quite right-
My heart a thumping with agitation.

Frightened when alone in any lift-
Suffering from claustrophobia.
Immoderate fear of all heights-
Conceding to my agoraphobia.

Panicking when thunder rumbles-
Can hardly conceal anxiety.
When family members home late return
I drape myself in timidity.

Worrying, imagining all mishaps-
Making those around uneasy.
Wondering where misfortune falls;
Praying for blessings unending.

It's a wonder I still can cope-
Living in such a fearful way.
I am now aware of a sure cure-
Facing just what happens today.

* * *

[3] Blessings

I intend to count my blessings –
A good bed to lie thereon –
Though quite often sleep eludes me–
Since sad thoughts I dwell upon.

I watch the dawn of the new day–
While I gaze at the bright sky,
My hands I stretch, eager to seize –
Meaningful time as it comes by.

Heaven thanks for those around –
Family, dog and all my friends –
Some of whom are very near –
Others I miss in far off lands.

I am now older; yet I cope –
Go about as yet unaided.
I live, I love, I laugh, I feel –
Yet my youth has long since faded.

So I for one will still rejoice –
Because not asking, I was blessed.
I daily seek to love my life
I just regret, the times I erred.

* * *

[4] Happiness and Tranquillity

Happiness I fail to define.
Maybe fortunate contentment –
Maybe riches, friends and family
Maybe honour and ability!

I'd rather own tranquillity -
Not depending on someone -
That will grant serenity,
That bestows stability!

Happiness is accidental –
Often delicate and brief –
Striking as a flash of lightning –
'Cross the dark sky of an evening!

A tranquil nature is a gift –
A precious treasure, priceless pearl –
Valuable in grief and bliss;
Anxieties prompt to decrease.

Happy moments quickly pass!
Tranquillity they'll not outdo.
Now I yearn for harmony –
Peace of mind and dignity!

* * *

[5] Do Not Be Afraid

'Get up; do not be afraid'
Said Jesus to his disciples
As brilliant clouds attired him
Startling his loyal apostles.

Then why should I worry and fret
At the slightest misadventure
That besets my daily life
Robbing me of my composure.

'Take your bed, get up and walk',
Jesus urged the crippled man.
Without effort he obeyed
Walking steadily he began.

Should not I go without fear?
Having faith in the divine?
When with trust I ask for help –
All misgivings to decline!

I don't dare walk on the waves -
That would be too much presumption –
Leading to my own undoing
Heading to untold confusion.

Let my will be strong and steadfast.
Let me shed all useless fear.
Let me live in alert daring.
Let all doubts soon disappear.

* * *

[6] A Christmas Welcome Brisbane 1964

Six o'clock, nineteen sixty-five;
The deserted streets of Brisbane,
Gave no sign of sound or life.
Is this really Christmas Eve?

Pubs are closed, no shops in sight;
No cars, no taxis or Council bus;
All blinds are down, no flash of light
Shines out bright, from any house.

Just two strangers on their home way;
Unlike the Christmas they once knew;
Where on an island far away,
The streets echoed with glad songs.

Two new residents feeling downcast;
So alone, so lost, so friendless;
No voice, no greeting, no joyful
'Happy Christmas and peace on earth.'

No relatives, nor friends await
With cheer, wine and Christmas cake –
On their return she nearly wept
With loneliness; the need for joy.

A nearby couple saw the two;
Called them in for a cold beer;
"Happy Christmas to both of you.
Won't you come in, share the cheer?"

Then all the four so wrapped in gladness;
Of the Season's blessed moments.
In new friendship and togetherness;
Welcomed the coming of the Child.

* * *

[7] I See Beauty

I gaze on beauty all around me –
The monstrous plane suspended in space;
Gives me a sense of bewilderment;
In mind I fly to a distant place.

I see beauty in grandmother's eyes,
As she reaches down adoringly,
To cuddle her grandchild's trusting form,
Hugs him, kisses him so tenderly.

I see beauty etched in lasting art;
The Pietà of Michelangelo,
The Mona Lisa of Da Vinci,
The Madonnas of Raffaello!

I see beauty when my loving pet,
Bounces up; welcomes me joyfully.
Wagging, barking she runs around me,
Absorbed in joyful activity.

Beauty in its many wondrous forms,
The rending of the skies by lightning,
The sad songs of the caged nightingale,

* * *

[8] A Trip to the Hairdresser

Going to the hairdresser reluctantly;
I feel as bad as visiting the dentist.
My locks are fashioned so unbecomingly
And I despair of my ever being pleased.

I plead, "Do not uncover my double crown.
That is where my hair is sparse and not so thick.
Let a strand touch the tip of my ear," I frown.
"Let a stray lock of hair fall on my forehead."

I might as well yell out, 'CUT' no more, no less,
Since my requests forever go unheeded.
Under his scissors I am just so helpless,
As through the bright mirror I watch sheepishly.

With deft fingers here and there, and a flourish
Of the hair dryer, pointing, patting the back
Holding a mirror. "Look how trendy," he smiles.
I agree; though doubtfully my head I shake.

Returning home, so annoyed I feel betrayed;
"How awful! How could I have been so witless.
My hair is ruined; does not suit me at all –
Too short at the front, at the back quite shapeless."

So when I am out and about, enviously
I quietly observe everybody's hair.
Feeling inadequate to myself I groan
"Very lucky they are in their hairdresser."

* * *

[9] An Idyllic Picture

In the reddish hues of the evening,
Arm in arm, my elderly parents
Are silently strolling, listening
To the whispering voice of the breeze!

Mum smiles at her grandchild blissfully
A three year old prancing at her side;
Brownie, Dad's puppy is playfully,
Breathlessly tugging at his leash.

I follow a step or two behind
Not daring to shatter the peace
Of the evening - the promise of hope
For tomorrow's awaited bliss.

* * *

[10] In Search of Happiness

I am searching for an answer;
In the myriad of self-help books;
Somewhat hoping for solutions;
For boredom and distractions!
What's the key to real happiness?
How can I avoid all sadness?

What am I missing in my life?
I am adequately sheltered;
A loving family I possess;
A beautiful dog I caress.
I don't hanker after wealth;
I enjoy fairly good health.

I want to learn how to shake off
Episodes of lethargy!
I am not completely helpless;
This life of mine is not so worthless!
Yet I cannot shape my destiny.
Nor achieve so brilliantly.

I wished to write a masterpiece;
Or be an opera soloist;
At least an excellent teacher;
Or a history lecturer!
My dreams have all but vanished;
Ambitious aims I have to banish.

It might be a healing comfort
If books help me in some way;
To achieve frequent happiness;
Forgetting all my weakness;
Coping well with change of fate;
Myself to value, ne'er to hate!

* * *

[11] Christmas in Malta

Once upon a time I was a child,
When Christmas fell in cold December.
Now far away in sunny Queensland –
I came to live but I remember –
The family joy on my small island.

When midnight struck in the Parish church,
An exultant Gloria sung out loud;
And organs sounded just like trumpets;
While angels floated from a cloud,
Wafting, shimmering in snowy white.

A little boy hardly eight years old,
In full resplendent, angelic white,
Traversed the aisle, went up the pulpit;
His shining face with a divine light;
Towards the crowd below he smiled.

His tender hands trembling with fervour;
Faces looking up without a sound;
The sermon he knew so well by heart;
Soprano voice reached all around;
Recounting the birth of Jesus Christ.

The Church resounded with clapping hands;
The boy had spoken brilliantly;
All hearts were touched with joyful bliss.
Hymns were sung with great solemnity.
Such Christmas faith I'll never forget.

* * *

[12] Christmas in Vienna (1984)

In the splendour of old Vienna
On the stroke of Christmas midnight –
With hearts beating, all the faithful
Were kneeling down in dazzling light.

A glorious burst of Christmas hymns;
From the voices of The Boys' choir;
Made the vast Cathedral echo.
Round its altar spread in colour.

From across the bright-lit square;
Where we tourists were residing;
All united in one purpose –
For the birth of Christ rejoicing!

In a language not familiar;
Holy Mass was being offered.
And the Boys' angelic chant;
Kept us spellbound, zeal inspired.

Every inch of space was covered –
With thick legions of believers.
For Communion in slow motion
We moved forward in deep prayers.

I relive that Christmas night –
Rich in ritual, song and piety!
Our souls spiritually bound –
To that wintry Viennese city!

* * *

[13] In Praise of the Sun

I was born in the summer month of June;
When the sun is at its highest splendour;
Mid-afternoon- warmest time of the day;
Radiant was the sun in its majestic grandeur.

As the Egyptians, I could worship the bright Sun –
Not as true god but as God's creation;
This is the symbol of peace, harmony,
And justice, clemency, inspiration!

Idling in the sun, I am transported –
With nostalgia, great yearning for the past;
Away from grief, hollowness and conflict;
Wishing for the joy that would forever last.

Waking in the morning with the promise;
Of another glad and glorious sunlit day;
Smilingly, wrapped in joyful expectation.
I pray; ' Oh sun heal me with a glorious ray.'

* * *

[14] Life Without Stress

Wanting to enrich my life;
Striving for balance to find;
The Self-Management of Stress
Simply and clearly defined;
– From preface to appendix,
– I read with rapt attention;
– Searching for a remedy;
– To gain some vague perception!

For every worrying symptom;
For every woe and distress;
Calm, peace without sedation;
As offered by Ainslie Meares.
– For boredom, high blood-pressure;
– For lack of concentration;
– For headache and anxiety;
– Depression, constipation;

Alcohol, retirement;
Obsessions, sleeplessness;
Lack of confidence and failure;
Jealousy, unhappiness;
-- There's a cure, a remedy;
-- An unfailing therapy;
-- Quite a simple antidote -
-- To make sick people happy!

I looked forward to achieve -
My rehabilitation...
Every chapter I perused
The answer is 'meditation'.
– Meditation I can't learn-
– With my thoughts' frequent intrusion;
– And my lack of discipline;
– Easing stress is an illusion.

I so wish to cure my cares;
To feel contented, to unwind;
But trying harder I just fail;
To stress I'm forever bound.
– I just thought of a distraction;
– With a book I will sit down;
– Forgetting all around me;
– Smoothing out my worried frown.

* * *

[15] My Computer Knows Everything

“Mum, help me with my homework tonight.
The teacher gave us a stupid assignment.
I’m telling you it’s no delight
To do research on Vesuvius and Pompeii.”

“I bought you a relevant book.
It was expensive and beautifully bound.
Open it, please, and carefully look
For information which you will surely find.”

“Oh no Mum. Books are no longer fine.
Together let us click on my computer.
It knows everything, every single line
Is true and easy. I’ll print the lot.”

Computers are better than teachers
For information, advice, entertainment;
They explain and deal with many features.
I won’t burden my brain. I’ll load my computer.

“I don’t want an encyclopedia.
I don’t need a library or newspaper.
I have the very best of media.
I sit, relax, click, click, click my computer.”

* * *

[16] Perfection.

For perfection I dare not strive-
Though avidly I yearn for it!
To contend with any rival -
I will never care a whit.

Boldness, patience and endurance,
I don't have in great abundance
Other virtues I might have -
Such as kindness, useful prudence

.
Trying to outdo my neighbour,
I deem pompous, dull and fruitless.
To myself I shall compare.
I'm satisfied with just as less.

Who in others seeks perfection -
Should look first within his heart
Guide and render fair instruction.
And by patience teach his craft.

I'm content with less than perfect
As long as duty I perform
Without rancour and pretension-
Just my best prompt to reform.

* * *

[17] Serenity

The virtues and excellence of serenity –
Are all ablaze in brilliant letters of gold,
Giving me hope, power and tranquillity,
Making me unperturbed, calm so very bold.

Bold to face my troubles with equanimity;
Without anger, hatred, vindictive emotions.
Daily striving for the longed-for ability,
That restrains me from all useless reactions.

Reactions leading me to dissatisfaction,
Adding wrinkles caused by dismal gloom.
Why surrender to harmful, cheerless dejection?
Why burden the mind, the soul with misty doom?

The word 'doom' I will erase from this day forward.
Serenity is my shield against pessimism.
To look ahead with trust, direct my thoughts toward
A smiling me, composed, embracing optimism,
I need no sedation or even deep meditation.

* * *

[18] Sleepless

It seems I cannot fall asleep
My brain heaving in a whirlwind;
A hurricane without an end
Flinging me in currents deep.

I try to dull my memory
To slip with ease in restful bliss;
To fall asleep I am determined;
To squash, repel all woeful worry.

I toss and rock from side to side;
Deeply I breathe, try to relax;
I fling my arms in emptiness -
Drowning in my figmental tide.

Longing for sleep, I try to pray;
To paint a happy loving scene;
But oh, my mind will not respond;
My pulse to slow will not obey.

Apt verses I start composing;
In the end I give up struggling -
A tug of war with just myself;
I now use my sleepless hours -
A poem is in the making.

* * *

[19] The dog gives thanks

Thank you for taking me home
Thank you for choosing me
Now I no longer sigh
Now I no longer beg
With longing in my sad eyes
Jumping up my wire cage
Praying for someone to stop,
To notice, to talk to me!

Now I am home with you
Loving me as you do
Playing daily with me
Feeding me nourishing food
Having a bed of my own
Being kept ever so clean
Giving me so many toys
What else can I wish for?

I promise to love you so
To be for ever loyal
To share with you all sadness
To know what you want from me
To protect you always
To follow you step by step
Please look attentively
You are the whole world to me.

Forgive my frequent mischief
When I rob you of your shoe
When I carry off your sock
When I tear your shopping list
When I bark at passers by
When I wake you in the night
After all I am your dog
Thank you so for everything..

* * *

[20] To Sleep

To sleep - perchance to dream...

To die, to sleep
No more, and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache...Hamlet 3/1

Sleep – mental rejuvenation –
And energy conservation –
Temporary forgetfulness –
Alike to hypnotism –
Existence unawareness!.

Sleep, repose from the day's pain –
Welcome relief from all anguish –
Suspended unconsciousness –
From earthly care Nirvana –
The blissful silence of slumber –
Passive heaven, total inertia.

Sleep with bizarre vivid dreams –
Of episodes worth forgetting –
Or incidents in remembering –
Or inky complete nothingness –
Suspended inanimation!

Any time in human life –
One last sleep for evermore –
Unknown passage to beyond –
May it be a peaceful one –
No more dull awakenings –
No more torment; no more cares.

* * *

[21] The Widow's Lonely Christmas

Alone, all alone on Christmas Day -
In my silent house, there are no joys.
Once it echoed with festive laughter.
Merry tunes loved by my loving boys.

Now only my tearful sighs resound.
My sons are far away, too far away.
For their voice, their Emails I await;
The phone to ring I long for everyday.

My loving husband, my one true friend,
A year ago his illness conquered him.
Past my embraces forever gone.
His smile, his laugh, now for me are dim!

Our old Sheepdog Jasmine also quit.
Near twelve years old; she missed her master so.
She was the one who understood me.
She died – I still can sense her echo.

Why do I indulge in self- pity?
Along the nearby park I'll take a walk.
I'll meet others as lonely as I am -
I'll give my brightest smile and stop to talk.

* * *

[22] To Our Elsie

You did not want to leave us ever
Because your love for us was boundless;
A lifetime you welcomed us joyfully;
For our return you waited patiently.

It did not matter that we were not far;
You could not bear to have us out of sight;
My return home was such a thrill to me;
You danced and pranced and wagged with boundless glee.

You were alert, so full of energy;
Constantly active, with youthful vigour -
Together we ran, we played each day;
Rain or shine, hot or cold, come what may.

And when I was emotionally low;
I sat near you because you made me smile;
I soon felt well, there was an end to tears,
And useless thoughts, to worries and to fears!

We never knew that you yourself were sick;
'Riddled with cancer,' the specialist said.
Not a groan, not a whimper came from you;
Beings like you there are only a few.

For just one night you were away from home;
For tests to be done as were necessary;
You missed us, you would not eat or drink;
And neither could I sleep or think.

We found you next day, lying peacefully;
Your time had truly come; you had to die –
In solitude, in an unfamiliar place;
I looked and cried and touched your lovely face.

Did you suffer alone; that one last night?
Why was I persuaded to leave you behind?
You would not die when we were around;
No remedies, no cure for you were found.

My darling Elsie, my beautiful pet;
My Dobermann Kelpie I miss you still;
I cannot forget you – my faithful one.
But sleep in peace; your earthly task is done.

* * *

[23] To Joseph Earthly father of Jesus

'Do not fear' said the angel of the Lord;
'For today is born to you a saviour'.
'You will find him lying in a manger'.
The shepherds went, knelt down in adoration.

The angel Gabriel had announced his birth
To Mary who was to be his mother.
No welcome home had been prepared for her -
Just docile animals kept her baby warm.

Holy Joseph, his earthly upright father
Was saddened by the plight of wife and son
Yet he too accepted; 'God's will be done'
Destined to protect mother and her child.

To Egypt of the powerful pharaohs;
Joseph led his wife on the humble donkey;
Her son holding tight, not wont to crying
Secure in the love of his father Joseph.

To Nazareth Joseph brought his family;
After years of fearing Herod the cruel.
Exile was sweet though far from Israel
With his wife and obedient divine child!

Often we do forget noble Joseph;
In the background of his little family;
The carpenter cared for so lovingly;
May our fathers look to him for guidance.

* * *

[24] To my Father

When a child I thought you were my giant,
My protector, the one who came and went,
Often you had to work so late at night
To reappear before the morning light.

And yet whenever any of us was ill
You would be near as if by magic;
Summoned by Mum who became so worried,
Somehow you answered, home you always hurried.

We were eight around the long, wooden table
Which skilfully you made for dinner time.
Mum at the head, and when your chair was vacant
We missed you, our mood was strangely silent.

You earned my respect, my admiration.
I agonized at the thought of losing you.
To us all you showed surpassing goodness,
Quiet affection, strength and every kindness.

You never found fault whatever we did;
Though I know we often pained and troubled you.
You let us be waiting so patiently.
You trusted us unconditionally.

My Mother was wise beyond comparison
When she chose you as her life companion.
And I am lucky to have you as my father.
Please pray that I will be your worthy daughter.

* * *

[25] To my Kelsey

1. Kelsey, naughty Kelsey
Active and so happy
Wakes up at five
And sleeps by nine

2. Heavens above
A long hard day
For work and for play
Now I am her owner

3. Learning to love her
Watching her grow
Help her belong
Her best to draw
She is a handful
But so delightful

4. My weird-looking Kelsey
Is so beautiful to me
Now barking at the thunder
For her nature is a wonder

5. She creates her daily fun
Chasing the sly, the teasing birds
Gazing up at helicopters
Every lizard is just hers

6. She munches the fresh grass
She chews the bark of trees
Grubs and worms she also likes
There is nothing she dislikes
She grew up so very spoilt
Never far from our sight

7. Hyperactive, tireless
No end to playfulness
She is not so difficult
Her antics are amusing
Yes she is so loveable
Winsome and adorable!

* * *

[26] To my Mother

You knew I loved you always –
Though I rarely told you so.
Now from me forever gone –
I feel deprived, often alone.

Actions spoke clearer than words –
Your unending selflessness –
When with care you nurtured me –
Bravely bearing what had to be.

Many times I caused you stress –
With my foolish willful ways;
My rash thoughtlessness I knew –
Caused you pain and anguish true.

Blessed joy of motherhood –
Often fused with so much woe –
I never gave you due esteem –
How may I my faults redeem?

Until the day we meet again –
Look at me with kind concern.
Till that day, please hear my plea.
Never, ever abandon me.

From high above do pray for me;
And ask Dad to do the same.
This Earth a truly vale of tears;

* * *

[27] To Our Daisy

You entered my life when Elsie left it –
Missing her it was hard to return home
By the front door she was not waiting –
To welcome me her dance she would perform.

Daisy, Elsie you could not then replace.
Since stroking you I always thought of her.
For a while you only had second place.
Asking for your pardon is surely fair.

But gradually you felt yourself at home.
We just needed time to love each other;
To understand our grief; to settle down –
To be at our ease; to be together!.

Your features of Elsie reminded me;
Dobermann both with happy wagging tail –
To guard us your own life you would not spare.
In loyalty to us you did not fail.

I cannot forget my lovely Elsie.
Darling Daisy, I hope you do not mind.
You filled a void. In your big brown eyes
A loving pet, I feel, I know I found.

Daisy, in time I learnt I learnt to love you –
For what you are; for what you proved to be.
Once again I humbly beg your pardon.
You are a lovable, dear pet to me.

* * *

[28] Two Islands

One where I was born, where life began;
The other where one day I am meant to die.
I loved the first so passionately;
I learnt to love the other gradually.

The first island so very tiny;
The second so vast extensive;
The first bereft of most resources
Just stone and sun, a lively nation
Wealthy in history and tradition!

The other still so full of promise
With assets yet to be discovered.
Refuge to those who left their country.
Who settle here with expectation -
Of employment, life satisfactions

The same blue sky blankets both islands;
The same bright sun shines o'er these lands.
Yet distant from each other are the two;
So rarely Malta did I return to you.

Malta and Australia I know you both;
My love for both is true though different.
Longing for the land that I won't see;
I like the land where I chose to be.

* * *

[29] Waiting for a call

Waiting for a telephone call –
The lonely sprightly widow –
In her sumptuous furnished room –
Photos cover a full wall.

Photos of her handsome husband –
On their happy wedding day –
With her sister as her bridesmaid –
Taking place in distant England.

They migrated to Australia –
Settled comfortably working hard –
Later on a daughter came;
Naming her little Cecelia.

In her turn Cecelia married
To a genial tall American –
While on holiday met his bride –
With his girl he felt contented.

Now the widow waits impatiently
For Cecelia to remember her.
She had been with her last Christmas;
She would ring just presently.

And the silence is heart rending –
Hard to bear – so much alone;
But her daughter won't forget her;
Her anxiety will be ending.

For the telephone strident ringing –
Breaks the quiet of the house.
On the line is her Cecelia;
"Mum to you I'll be returning."

"Without me, you could not celebrate –
On this special Christmas day –
"Do not worry; do not miss me;
My return patiently await".

So the widow wiped a tear –
Smiling in her happiness –
"For today, I'll be content;
Knowing that you soon be here."

* * *

[30] Written on arrival to Brisbane Queensland
June 1964

Brisbane, friendly city of adoption,
Your City Hall recalls the Grecian past.
A tranquil river laps your gardens vast.
The sun in benign warmth reaches perfection.

Cold, sleet or winds will not prevail or last.
The twinkling stars, the sparkling moon – their fast
Embrace folds you in resplendent emotion.

You heeded not I was born an alien;
You offered refuge, faith, hope and future
When I forsook my Mediterranean.

If truly your diverse people attain
Unselfishness – soul's visible splendour –
Their bright City they will learn to acclaim.

* * *

[31] Remembering San Anton Gardens, Malta
(Australia 2.2.2012)

They were part of lively youth –
These glorious gardens in my village –
Introduced to me by mum –
As a babe in my old stroller –
A happy woman and her child!

I walked through them as a child –
On my daily walk to school –
Lingering under shady trees –
Where I often stopped to read –
The names of gorgeous flowers!

I bounced up the wide staircase –
Leading past the silent palace –
Once belonging to the Knights –
Knelt a moment at the chapel –
Sending up a heart-fell prayer.

In my teens I, with my friends –
On summer's soothing evenings –
Sat enthralled for Shakespeare's plays –
Or enjoyed other events –
Fetes and music and farm arrays.

My attentive future husband –
Sat me down on a quiet seat –
Telling me about his dreams –
How together we would live –
In a prosperous far-off land!

In their turn with my two sons –
While I watched with anxiety –
As they leaned on the pond railing –
Admiring the gracious swans –
With a smile on their young face!

How can I forget the times –
I was part of San Anton –
The memory forever etched –
In my mind and in my heart –
Of a noble garden heaven!

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